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ABSTRACT

The history of the movement to establish English as the single official language of the United States (official English or English-only movement) is chronicled from the drafting of the Constitutions to the present, with emphasis on developments since the 1980s. Increasing interest in the early 1980s is attributed to political factors and demographic trends that emphasized a renewed commitment to "American" values. Stated and unstated goals of the proposed policy are discussed, and a historical tendency toward "language restrictionism" is traced from the early days of the United States through a number of distinct periods in which immigration rates were elevated. Recent legislative efforts of the English-only movement are detailed, and the role and policies of the political lobbying organization, US English, in this movement are explored. In conclusion, all individuals involved in English language education are encouraged to oppose official English legislation. (Contains 13 references.) (MSE)

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ED 426 599

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LANGUAGE RESTRICTIONISM IN THE UNITED STATES[1]

by
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Thomas Ricento

Introduction

The current movement to declare English the official language of the United States began in 1981 when the late Senator S.I. Hayakawa of California introduced a constitutional amendment (S.J. Res. 72) into the US Congress. The proposed amendment was never reported out of committee, but over the next decade, 18 states passed initiatives naming English as their official language. Hayakawa was no doubt a maverick, and dismissed by more "mainstream" politicians, but he helped spark a movement that continues to this day.

There are a number of reasons the official English movement picked up steam in the early 1980s. Ronald Reagan was elected President in 1980, ushering in a new era in domestic politics in which the "old," proud America, the "shining city on the hill", would replace an America mired in malaise, still paralyzed by the "Vietnam syndrome." The ethnic revival movement of the 1960s and 1970s, and federal support for so-called bilingual education programs, were being criticized by some in the popular press as divisive, and in the case of bilingual education, unnecessary and expensive. Nothing could be taken for granted anymore, so the argument went, even the preeminent status of the English language. With the dramatic increase in immigrants from Asian and Latin American countries beginning in 1965, many Americans, especially in large cities, felt their way of life was under assault. The sounds of Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, and many other languages were heard with increasing frequency in American towns and cities; the American border in the southwest was too porous; projections of demographic patterns showed that the older immigrant populations were not replacing themselves as quickly as were the newer, non-European groups. Amidst this uncertainty and relatively rapid increase in immigrant populations, English

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became a symbol, and its protection a cause around which disgruntled citizens could rally.

Certainly, a renewed commitment to "American" values was a central theme of the 1980s; and as in earlier periods of social change and international turmoil, reaffirmation of the status of the English language symbolized a desire to reassert the power of groups who felt their influence, their place, was being eclipsed by uncontrollable forces. During the colonial period, again in the 1830s with the first wave of large-scale European immigration, and during the great wave of European immigration from roughly 1880 to 1920, movements to restrict the public use of non-English languages led to the passage of English-only laws in education, voting, and the judicial system. The period immediately prior to, and during US participation in World War I, saw heightened anti-German hysteria, an assault on German organizations and publications, and an aversion to foreign cultures and ideas, generally. A similar phenomenon occurred during World War II, especially with regard to Japanese and German Americans.

Although throughout US history, most immigrants have traveled to America to start new lives and embrace opportunities in the "promised land," ethnic enclaves along the eastern seaboard and in other parts of the country often provided necessary cultural and linguistic linkages between the old and new worlds. Some immigrants objected to total assimilation if it meant renouncing native language and culture. Such attitudes helped fuel anti-foreigner hysteria prevalent in Americanization campaigns which sought absolute loyalty to so-called American ideals. It was around this time, in the early part of the 20th century, that the cleavage between those who championed total assimilation (the melting pot) and those who supported cultural pluralism (hyphenated Americans) first appeared. The effects of the Americanization campaign of this period, which led to the virtual elimination of not only bilingual German-English education, but also to a significant decrease in the number of students studying German as a foreign language in the schools, are felt to this day. It wasn't until a half century later, in 1968, that the federal government would directly fund bilingual education programs in a systematic way, and even that funding had as its primary goal increasing fluency in

English among limited English-speaking (LEP) students in the southwest. The idea that being American meant giving up one's ancestral language and values was expressed by Theodore Roosevelt, in a message to the American Defense Society in 1919:

> for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed or birthplace or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American and nothing but an American. If he tries to keep segregated with men of his own origin and separated from the rest of America, then he isn't doing his part as an American...We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding-house. (cited in Crawford 1992a, p. 59).

Of course, this discussion has thus far not addressed the status of involuntary immigrants--enslaved Africans--for whom assimilation was not a viable choice, or so-called colonized peoples, including Native Americans, Mexican Americans who were incorporated into the US as a result of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, Puerto Ricans who have lived between two cultures, and peoples in current and former US territories and protectorates, none of whom have had much, if any, say in language policy issues.

Despite disclaimers by supporters of official English, the indirect--if not direct--goal of English-only policies is to restrict the domains in which non-English languages can be used. Historically, where such restrictions have been implemented, they have effectively disenfranchised large numbers of immigrants from access to government services, voting, and

equal educational opportunities. The reasons given in support of officializing English have varied over the years, depending on the circumstances, but common themes can be listed: to keep America "American" in the face of large-scale immigration; to safeguard national security in times of war; to speed up the assimilation process for groups which seem to resist assimilation; to ensure the safety of workers (and sometimes as a recruitment tool for unions); to ensure public discourse does not break down. Yet, nothing in the proposed bills to make English the official language of the United States would address any of the hypothetical concerns listed above. Indeed, even though only about 2% of the US population speaks English "not well" or "not at all" (according to the 1990 US Census), voter apathy and distrust of government are higher than ever.

A Brief History of Language Restrictionism in the US

All nation-states have mythologies about their origins, about their special destiny, about their defining characteristics. The United States is no exception to this principle. At the time the US Constitution was drafted and ratified, many languages were spoken in the United States in addition to English, including German, Dutch, French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Greek, Yiddish, Arabic, as well as hundreds of American Indian languages and African-based creoles. Yet, in *The Federalist* (1788), John Jay characterized the nation as "one united people–a people descended from the same ancestors, *speaking the same language* [italics added], professing the same religion...very similar in their manners and customs" (Crawford 1992a, p. 32). This was the *idealized* America, envisaged by the prosperous elite who described a norm that excluded many Americans--the non-English, non-white, non-Protestant, and non-English-speaking. The fact that the America of 1787 encompassed many cultures and languages was not seen as relevant or problematic by the Founding Fathers. Such myopia was perhaps understandable in an era when African Americans were property and Native Americans were considered "heathen savages," neither group a part of the discussion. Although James Madison, again in *The Federalist*, acknowledged that societies are divided into different sects and interests, he was probably not thinking of ethnic and linguistic groups.

As James Crawford notes, "...in 1787 cultural pluralism was a *concept* [italics mine] yet to be invented" (1992a, pp. 33-34).

However, the presence of non-English speakers (although of European background) did become an issue in certain sections of the country where their numbers created a noticeable presence, most notably with Germans in Pennsylvania. Benjamin Franklin worried that the German influence, if unchecked, would supersede Anglo supremacy, not only in language, but in terms of culture and political values. In a letter to Peter Collinson, a British member of parliament, dated May 9, 1753, Franklin proclaimed that "those [Germans] who come hither are generally the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation...and as few of the English understand the German Language, and so cannot address them either from the Press or Pulpit, 'tis almost impossible to remove any prejudices they once entertain" (Franklin 1753, cited in Crawford 1992b, p. 19). Franklin was doubtful whether German immigrants would be capable of understanding the precepts of republican government laid down by the Founding Fathers. Similar fears were expressed by Thomas Jefferson in 1803 about the abilities of French-speakers in the Louisiana Territories to govern themselves. Franklin and Jefferson, among other colonial leaders, worried that immigrants from non-democratic countries, and especially from non-Protestant religious backgrounds, would bring monarchist views to the New World and might not easily embrace the tenets and responsibilities of constitutional democracy. It was further believed that the use of non-English languages would perpetuate foreign ideas and threaten civil society. Yet, German immigrants, although they established German-towns, maintained an active German language press, German cultural societies and clubs, were strong supporters of American independence, and fought and died in the American Revolutionary War, many in German-language battalions. The articles of confederation were published in German and little was lost in the translation, apparently. Franklin's concerns about German ideas prevailing over English ideas, or about divided loyalties or opposition based on cultural or linguistic differences, were put to rest. Interestingly, as the German American community assimilated and the Anglo conformity

model was affirmed, Franklin softened his opposition and promoted the establishment of the first German-language institution of higher education in the US, Franklin & Marshall College.

Other immigrant groups were similarly discriminated against in the 19th and 20th centuries. A few further examples illustrate the pattern. Discrimination was usually based on differences in religion, race, cultural or social values, and beliefs. Language was often a convenient symbol under which racial or cultural discrimination could be subsumed. For example, the Know-Nothing Party, beginning in the 1850s, espoused anti-Catholic and anti-immigrant views which led to language restrictionist policies in California and other states. Chinese immigrants were attacked, barred from employment, disqualified from owning land, not allowed to vote due to English literacy requirements, and were not allowed to testify against whites in court (Crawford 1992a, p. 47). Discrimination against Spanish-speakers has a long history; in 1855, legislation was passed in California mandating English-only instruction in both public and private schools. It was a crime in Texas until 1973 to use a language other than English as the medium of public instruction; the Texas Department of Education encouraged teachers to punish children who used Spanish in the classroom or the playground (see Crawford 1992a, pp. 79-83). In the 1880s, nativist groups helped pass laws restricting the use of German in public and parochial schools in Wisconsin (the Bennett Law) and Illinois (the Edwards Law). Although both laws were later repealed, the fundamental fear and distrust of cultural pluralism which informed those measures continues to motivate language restrictionist policies today.

The Americanization campaign of the early 20th century affected not only German-speakers, but Japanese, Korean, and Chinese Americans, as well as Spanish-speakers and other subjugated groups that resided in what was to become the United States before the arrival of Europeans in the 16th century. Attempts to prohibit the teaching of Japanese, Chinese and Korean in private schools in California and Hawaii were voided by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1926, which also overturned laws prohibiting the teaching of other non-English

languages in at least twenty-two other states (Tamura 1993, pp. 44-45). In New Mexico, Spanish-speaking citizens resisted an English-only language policy, not only in the public schools, but for "all State officers and members of the State legislature" (Crawford 1992a, p. 42). Delegates to the 1910 constitutional convention passed antidiscrimination protections for Spanish speakers in voting and education, even allowing loopholes for provision of bilingual English-Spanish education (Crawford 1992a, pp. 52-53). Although many attempts to outlaw or restrict the use of non-English languages have been overturned by elections or court decisions, the cumulative effect on public attitudes has been profound. The unchallenged dominance of English is so unquestioned, that most Americans, when asked, assume that English is *already* the official language. It is further assumed that anyone in this country *should* speak English, and if they don't, there must be something the matter with that person. Americans also tend to expect that when they travel abroad, people in other countries will speak English.

The preeminence and vitality of English as the public language has never been challenged at any time in US history, including the present day. However, while most voluntary immigrants have been assimilated, members of indigenous groups, such as Native Americans, of involuntary immigrant groups, such as African Americans, and members of subjugated groups, such as Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Rican Americans have suffered from long-standing English-only assimilationist policies which have tended to undervalue, and hence undermine, their ancestral languages and cultures, ultimately impeding the assimilation process. Speaking English was no guarantee of upward mobility for generations of members of these groups; today, many groups, including many Native American tribes, have realized that reestablishing and reconnecting to their cultural/linguistic roots is a necessary prerequisite to being valued by, and integrating with, the dominant society. Further, English-only really means *standard* English-only; speakers of non-standard varieties of English, such as African American English, Chicano English, Indian English, and Appalachian English (to name a few) are also denied access to social and economic mobility by gate-keeping institutions such as schools, and by employers.

The Current Official English Movement

In the decades 1901 to 1910, and 1981 to 1990, more immigrants arrived in the US than in any other ten year period since the census has been conducted (8,795,000 and 7,338,000, respectively). Is it merely a coincidence that in each of these periods, laws and initiatives were passed restricting the linguistic, and in some cases, civil rights of non-English speakers? In both periods, calls were made for restricting both the number and countries of origin of immigrants. Whereas in the earlier period, it was more acceptable to publicly deride the intelligence and values of certain groups, today pundits such as Patrick Buchanan and William F. Buckley claim we should be more careful in whom we admit, since anyone would agree that, in the words of Buchanan, it is easier to acculturate someone from England than an African Zulu ('Brits, Zulus, Buchanan and Politics,' *Detroit Free Press*, February 12, 1992). Today, as in 1900, claims are being made about the inherent inferiority of some groups compared to others (refer to, for example, the recently published book *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life* by R.J. Herrnstein and C. Murray, Free Press, 1994). It is well for us to recall that the earlier period of large-scale immigration prompted an interest in the newly developed "science" of IQ testing (imported from France and based on the work of Alfred Binet); it was found that certain groups (e.g., "negroes" and persons from eastern and southern Europe) scored lower on these tests. In fact, based on tests administered by Henry Goddard in 1912, in English, it was found that 83 percent of the Jews, 80 percent of the Hungarians, 79 percent of the Italians, and 87 percent of the Russians who had recently arrived in the United States were "feeble-minded" (Goddard, 1913, cited in Kamin, 1977, p. 55). These "scientific" findings helped persuade the US Congress to pass the Johnson-Laird Immigration Act of 1924, which established national origin quotas of 2% of the number of foreign born already in the country as determined by the census of 1890, before the arrival of the "feeble-minded" immigrants. Today, as was the case nearly 100 years ago, large changes in population characteristics have led to somewhat predictable results. Politicians have seized on anti-immigrant prejudice to win elective office; in California, Governor Pete Wilson

probably owed his reelection in 1994 to his support of Proposition 187, an initiative passed by California voters by a 3:2 margin, which would deprive undocumented aliens from receiving public education or services, except for emergency medical care. California voters also approved Proposition 63 in 1986 (77% of voters approved), which made English the official language of California. Some states are considering restricting benefits to legal immigrants as well.

As far as federal legislation is concerned, none of the bills introduced in the last two sessions of Congress has become law; however, it is worthwhile to examine the contents of the bills, since some version of official English legislation will likely be considered in current and future sessions. Four official English bills were introduced in the 103rd Congress (1993-1994), three in the House of Representatives and one in the Senate. One of the House bills sought to amend the US Constitution (H.J. RES 171); the other three were more narrow in focus. H.R. 123 would have modified Title IV of the US Code, making English the "official language" of government; the bill offered no specific programs or funding to achieve its stated goals. A companion bill, H.R. 124, offered incentives for employers to provide English language training for their non- or limited-English speaking employees (it would do nothing for those who are unemployed, or whose employers chose not to provide English language training). Another bill, H.R. 739, introduced by Rep. Toby Roth (Republican-Wisconsin), would have established English as the preferred language of communication among all US citizens, "reformed" current naturalization requirements, and sought to repeal all federal bilingual education and voting rights programs (Inman 1994, p. 11). H.J. RES 171, introduced by Representative John Doolittle (Republican-California) would have amended the US Constitution, requiring that English be used for all public acts, including every order, resolution, vote, or election, and for all records and judicial proceedings of the United States Government. Passage would require a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Congress, and ratification by three fourths of the states within seven years of its submission.

The first new "official English" legislation of the Republican-controlled 104th Congress was

introduced by Congressman King (Republican-New York) on February 21, 1995. Titled the "National Language Act of 1995," this legislation would: declare English the official language of the Government of the United States (all business, publications, income tax forms, and informational materials would be in English only, with four exceptions: for religious purposes, for training in foreign languages for international communication, for programs in schools designed to encourage students to learn foreign languages, or by persons over 62 years of age); terminate federal support of bilingual education programs by repealing the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, and terminate the Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA); repeal the bilingual voting requirements by repealing Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; amend the Immigration and Nationality Act (Section 337(d)), to read 'All public ceremonies in which the oath of allegiance is administered pursuant to this section shall be conducted solely in the English language.' This bill, had it become law, would have repealed laws and policies which have provided increased access to educational opportunity, and a civic voice for non-English speakers for the past thirty years. Although the King bill failed to move out of committee, a different and less restrictive bill was passed in the U.S. House of Representatives on August 1, 1996. H.R. 123 (The English Language Empowerment Act), a modified version of a bill introduced in the 103rd Congress, would repeal federal bilingual ballots and prohibit federal employees from communicating in writing in non-English languages, although oral communication in non-English languages was not prohibited. The Senate failed to act on a similar bill before the Congress adjourned. However, official English legislation has been reintroduced in the 105th Congress; as of this writing, no action has been taken.

US English

Since its inception in 1983, the political lobbying organization US English has spent millions of dollars--$28 million between 1983 and 1990 (Crawford 1992a, p. 4)--to promote the passage of a constitutional amendment, as well as federal and state laws, declaring English the

official language of the United States (more recently, they have focussed their attention on making English the official language of government at all levels). Other groups with similar agendas include English First and the American Ethnic Coalition. In general, these groups warn that unless English is made the official language, nothing will prevent America from devolving into a balkanized collection of ethnic collectivities, led by power-hungry ethnic leaders. These sorts of mindless scare tactics are effective with individuals already convinced that there are too many "undesirable" immigrants in the United States (or perhaps too many ethnic and racial minorities altogether). For other, more open-minded citizens, appeals are made with ads in national publications such as *The Atlantic Monthly* and *U.S.A. Today*. In these ads, "ethnics" who have made it are pictured, usually busily at work at some prestigious job, proclaiming that "To make it in America, you need to speak my language" (i.e., English)(*The Atlantic Monthly*, Dec. 1993). The person pictured has a Ph.D. from Columbia University "...involved in cutting edge genetics research--living proof that English is the key to opportunity in America." The ad goes on to state (rather deceptively) that US English supports projects "...that will ensure that all Americans have the chance to learn the language of equal opportunity." In fact, US English has spent precious little of its funds on English language education, and only began to do so when critics of the organization pointed out the hypocrisy of promoting English as the official language, while spending virtually nothing on English education. Certainly, foreign students studying for advanced degrees in American universities do not need to be convinced that English is necessary to achieve success. In fact, the entire US English approach is based on a totally false premise, i.e., that immigrants are resisting learning English. The real problem is that the vast majority of children needing English language instruction in the US are not receiving it. For example, in the 1990-91 school year, at least 521,000 Limited English Proficient (LEP) children needing English instruction did not receive any. Of the roughly 3 million school-age LEP children in the US in 1993, ***only 15 percent*** were in federally funded bilingual programs (Winn-Bell Olsen, 1993)(keep in mind that the goal of these so-called bilingual programs is to improve the *English* proficiency of LEP students so they can be mainstreamed into English-only classrooms as soon as possible). In addition, thousands of adults are on waiting-lists for available slots in

overcrowded ESL programs across the country.

What is really behind the US English campaign? An examination of internal documents, funding sources, and written statements of leaders provides some of the answers. [A more detailed discussion of US English is provided in Crawford, 1992a, pp. 148-175.] The founder of US English, Michigan ophthalmologist John Tanton, has long been interested in restricting immigration to the US, particularly from countries south of the border. In 1979, he founded the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), serving as chairman until 1987. US English was a spin-off of FAIR, sharing personnel and funding sources, and a common ideology, namely, unless immigration of (largely) non-white groups is reduced, the United States could become a "majority minority" society by 2020. Although critics sensed an anti-immigration, and especially anti-Hispanic, agenda underlay the zero-population growth rhetoric of FAIR and US English, it was difficult to prove their case. However, the publication in the *Arizona Republic* of portions of a confidential internal memo written by Tanton in 1988 provided more than enough evidence that fear of a Hispanic takeover was very much on the mind of the group's founder. Tanton wrote, in part:

> Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile?...Can *homo contraceptivus* compete with *homo progenitiva* if borders aren't controlled?...Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!...As whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion? (in Crawford 1992a, p. 151)

Questions about the intelligence and values of Latin American immigrants were also raised:

> Will Latin American migrants bring with them the tradition of the *mordida* (bribe), the lack of involvement in public affairs...Is assimilation a function of the educational and economic level of

> immigrants? If so, what are the consequences of having so many ill-educated people coming in to low paying jobs?...What are the differences in educability between Hispanics (with their 50 percent dropout rate) and Asiatics (with their excellent school records and long tradition of scholarship)?...(Crawford 1992a, p. 154)

Tanton also questioned whether the brand of Catholicism imported from Mexico would eventually threaten the doctrine of the separation of church and state. Revelation of the memo led to the resignations of US English President Linda Chavez and John Tanton, as well the resignation of Walter Cronkite from the US English advisory board. But that was not the end of the story.

Financial records of US English revealed that the organization had received $680,000 between 1982 and 1989 from the Pioneer Fund, an organization dedicated to "race betterment" through eugenics. The Fund was established in 1937 by Harry H. Laughlin, a consultant to the House Immigration Committee who had convinced Congress that eastern and southern Europeans were racially inferior to northern Europeans. Another contributor to US English was Cordelia Scaife May, an heiress to the Mellon fortune. In 1983, May's foundation contributed funds to distribute a controversial French novel, *The Camp of the Saints,* by Jean Raspail, in which third world refugees invade Europe. The book was praised by several US English leaders; Linda Chavez was appalled by the racist sentiments it expressed.

While these and other revelations concerning financial irregularities damaged the reputation of US English, the organization has rebounded, and continues to promote its agenda of officializing English and opposing bilingual education, multilingual ballots, and access to public services in non-English languages. The organization operates as a tax-exempt, charitable organization, even though it actively lobbies Congress and finances legislation-related activities. Further, it provides a relatively small portion of its annual income to

promote adult English literacy, even though it claims in its promotional literature that it only wants to "...support efforts to enable all Americans to learn English--the language of equal opportunity" (cited in Crawford 1992a, p. 175). Who would oppose such an innocuous-sounding goal? Yet, making English the official language of the United States, or its government, would not enable anyone to learn English. The simplicity of the message, one which few Americans would question, accounts for the success US English has enjoyed, and for the fact that 22 states have adopted English as their official (or co-official) language, all but 5 since 1981 when the current movement, led by US English, began. However, removing bilingual ballots, enforcing English-only (submersion) education for all students, restricting communications between government officials and ordinary citizens, discontinuing public service announcements and important health and safety information in non-English languages, removal of non-English signs in public offices, withdrawing of public monies for non-English media services (the list goes on and on) would not be in *anyone's* interest [for an extended discussion on the far-reaching effects such legislation would have, see Ricento, 1998]. Restricting access of citizens and non-citizens alike because of a language barrier is not only bad public policy, but an insult and a calculated provocation, the initial step to what would certainly be a protracted conflict between English and non-English speakers.

When one considers the historical record of the immigrant experience in the US, two pictures (at least) emerge. One is of the ethnic and linguistic richness that we all accept as part of the American story; ethnic food and music, the many Chinatowns and Little Italies, the heroes from the fields of sports, entertainment, and politics. The other is the pain experienced by many of being "different", of being an identifiable "ethnic", even after generations of residence in the United States. The indignity is even greater for African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans whose ancestors predate the arrival of the more recent European groups. The ideal is that we can all become Americans; the reality is that it is easier for some than for others to be accepted as "American". The English language has often been used as a marker of one's "American-ness," and the use of non-English languages as a marker of one's "foreign-ness." Penalizing non-English speakers by limiting their access to public services,

voting, and education is illogical, for it would *further* stigmatize non-English speakers, rather than help them acquire the language. If some Americans *choose* not to learn English, that will be punishment enough. To deliberately fortify the status of English by officializing it will merely add insult to injury for the vast majority of non-English speakers struggling to learn the language.

Everyone involved with English education should take it upon him- or herself to oppose official English legislation wherever and whenever possible. TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages), an international educational association whose mission is to strengthen the effective teaching and learning of English around the world, supports the notion of English-plus, that is, the right of all Americans to acquire English *in addition to* their native language (if it isn't English), not as a replacement for that language. For native English speakers, the learning of another language should be encouraged. Being bi- or multilingual is the norm in most countries. Monolingualism is a costly policy; undervaluing other languages, and by extension other cultures, does little to strengthen "American" culture. Languages are resources of great political, economic, and strategic value, a view clearly not embraced by those who support the official English movement in the United States. But how about other countries? In 1986, US English published a survey of 161 constitutions from around the world , and reported that 64 designate an official language. What the report fails to mention is that of these 64 countries, all but 17 protect the rights of linguistic minorities by naming more than one official language, or by stipulating specific antidiscrimination guarantees. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that of the 14 countries that call English their official language, not one has named English its *sole* official language (Crawford 1992a, pp. 237-238). As Crawford notes, "in a world with approximately 160 national flags and some 6,000 languages, the odds weigh heavily against unilingualism" (1992a, p. 238). Perhaps it is time that the United States caught up with the rest of the world.

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1. This is a revised version of an article which first appeared in S.J. Dicker, R.M. Jackson, T.K. Ricento, & K. Romstedt (Eds.), 1995, *Official English? No!: TESOL's recommendations for countering the Official English movement in the US* (pp. 7-17). Washington, D.C.: TESOL.